



March 19, 2019

Hon. Senator Cassano and Hon. Representative McCarthy Vahey
Co-Chairs, Planning and Development Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2100
Hartford, CT 06106
pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: Testimony on House Bill No. 7192 entitled “An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and Efficiencies”

Dear Co-Chairs Cassano and McCarthy Vahey, and Members of the Planning and Development Committee,

The member towns of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments have benefitted from, and continue to benefit from, the voluntary regionalization of a number of programs and services. These include:

- *health districts*
- *public safety answering point*
- *transit services*
- *school districts*
- *ambulance services*
- *animal control*
- *paramedic services*
- *municipal solid waste and recycling transfer stations*
- *public works equipment cooperative*
- *cooperative purchasing program*
- *neighbor-to-neighbor program*
- *prescription assistance program*
- *fuel bank program*
- *emergency management*
- *household hazardous waste collection*
- *economic development program*

Fundamental to the success of these regional efforts is their locally driven, voluntary approach during program development. If it makes sense to regionalize a municipal service or program

to enhance effectiveness or efficiency, then our towns will pursue it. HB 7192 includes a number of provisions to enhance regionalism and the NHCOC, consisting of the Mayor and First Selectmen from 21 member towns, offers the following comments on the bill.

1) Strengthening the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. The NHCOC generally supports this recommendation and the related SB 1072 bill entitled "AAC the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations". ACIR can provide an important forum for discussing and researching regional opportunities and efficiencies and advising OPM accordingly. Of particular value would be ACIR preparation of comprehensive cost/benefit assessments of any proposed service sharing recommendations.

2) Regional Service Grant Funding for Council of Governments. This provision of the bill would reduce funding to the NHCOC by 57%. The NHCOC depends upon the current level of funding to support our small staff of four people. We urge that the funding level for COGs under this bill be restored to its current level. This is particularly important as we collectively consider additional regional opportunities and efficiencies.

3) New Commission on Shared School Services. Rather than establishing a new Commission, consideration should be given to tasking the ACIR with the responsibility of researching and developing a plan for any redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts.

4) Establishment of five geographic "Revaluation Zones". Consideration should be given to utilizing the nine COG boundaries instead of aggregating this responsibility into five new geographic zones. Research and documentation is needed to better justify the purpose to be served by these new "Revaluation Zones".

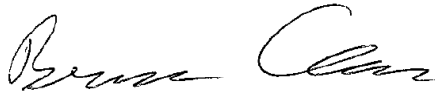
5) Establishment of a "Regional Assessment Division" in each COG. It is unclear what the purpose is of this new mandate and if it would actually save our towns money. More research and documentation is needed.

6) Regionalization of Public Safety Answering Points. The NHCOC region has already regionalized a PSAP through Litchfield County Dispatch and the consolidated program works very well. It is important that any incentives offered to other areas to consolidate their PSAPs not reduce funding to the already established regional PSAPs that are available to serve as a model for other areas.

The NHCOC is very encouraged that HB 7192 has been prepared and is under discussion by the Planning and Development Committee. As advocates of voluntary regionalism, the NHCOC finds the bill to include a number of regional opportunities that merit further discussion. It will be important however that most of the proposals receive more thorough research and documentation of cost/benefit impacts prior to adoption. The NHCOC looks forward to the opportunity to participate in these future discussions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bruce Adams".

Bruce Adams, Chairman
and Kent First Selectman

cc: NHCOG Members
Area Legislators
COST
CCM
CTCOG